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A PROPER USE OF TRANSLATIONS: EXCERPTS FOR SIGHT READING OF LATIN

We who began to study the Classics thirty-five years ago were quite certain of three things, if of nothing else: first, that Greek and Latin writers never made a mistake in grammar; secondly, that in our Latin reading we should imitate Cicero alone and never jeopardize our style and taste by reading postclassical authors until such time as our Ciceronianism should be so perfected as to be safe against contamination; thirdly, that the use of translations as 'trots' was 'wicked'. The world has moved much since then and we a little. To be sure, editors of classical texts still conspire to deny the ancients all indulgence in solecisms. Only a few slips here and there, such as, perhaps, Catullus's unfulfilled wish expressed without an *utinam* (2.9), have defied deletion by the purists and so remain to justify the impression that ancient authors might be human beings like the rest of us and not mere masters of grammar. Cicero, however, has fallen or at least has been tottering from his dictatorship. Writers once deemed quite ineligible to the society of that traditional triad, Caesar, Cicero, and Vergil, now contribute stories or other extracts to the instruction of our class-rooms. More revolutionary still is the wide employment of manufactured Latin. Of course, this had its modest beginnings long ago in France and Germany, as well as in our own country, especially in the form of simplified compilations from the ancient texts. But nowadays, with no shame at all, Priscilla says to Iohannes, the envoy extraordinary of Miles Standish, *Nonne pro te dicturus es?* And the wolf addresses little Cucullus Ruber (oh, these genders!) in the finest of wolverine Latinity.

As for 'trots', pupils still resort to them because they abbreviate the pains of preparation inevitable to the daily lesson, sometimes disclose the source of their teacher's best translations, and in general impart a certain bitter-sweet pleasure that the sons and daughters of Eve continue to find in undetected naughtiness. The popularity, however, of 'Bohns' and 'interlinears' is exposed to a steadily increasing impairment. Tests in sight translations and the cruelties of comprehensive examinations put a premium upon a student's independent study. The teacher has, indeed, a throttling hold upon this evil, if he really cares to grip it to the death.

Much pondering recently of these various *mutata* and *mutanda* in pedagogy prompts me to enter here first of all a plea for a wider use of translations in spite of their traditional relegation to the Index Expur-

gatorius of the teacher. Some consciousness of facility in reading Latin must be present in the pupil's mind very early, if his study of it is not to prove as irksome as any merely mechanical and meaningless job is. Many short cuts devised under the pressure of the psychologist's doctrine of interest have rather injured than helped the cause of the Classics. There is, of course, no royal road to learning, and the road to a mastery of Greek or Latin is surely paved with stumbling blocks of the most tripping sort. Intensive study of forms and syntax is necessary, if one would lay the foundation for anything that is worth the building. But may we not properly encourage at least our College students to supplement the specific work on the daily lesson by authorized and directed reading in parts of the author that are not to be dissected in the class-room with some excellent translation at hand that will spare them most of the somewhat mechanical labor of thumbing a dictionary? During my own student days, if I may be personal, I read in that way thousands of pages of Greek and Latin, and, without blinking the possible evils of the method, I still see in it a great gain for anybody who tries it thoroughly and conscientiously. A richer vocabulary, a sense of style, a surer recognition of forms and syntax can be expected to result from indulgence in such 'wickedness'. As the beginner approximates the facility in translating that is attained relatively early in the study of a modern language, the feeling that he is steadily gaining power is a satisfaction and an inspiration.

With our first suggestion may we now link another that seems more important? Scattered through the Latin authors from ancient times to the Renaissance are interesting narratives that can be excerpted for use in the class-room for rapid reading at sight, but commonly we find them too difficult for our Freshman courses. On the other hand, we have among us an increasing number of Romans supplying the Schools with elementary books which contain the simple stories that Caesar and Cicero ought to have written in anticipation of our pedagogical needs, but, alas! failed to write. For the most part these fictions diverge no more seriously from the Ciceronian norm than, let us say, O. Henry's English from that of Stevenson, and contain no more solecisms than much that passes with our contemporaries as readable literature. Why, then, should we not extend the usefulness of this modern Latin and use it also in exercises in translation at sight? By no means the least lively, encouraging, and instructive ten minutes of the hour would be those in which

a class, let us say, in Livy, read some account in easier Latin of the Colonial, Civil, or European wars of our country. Modernity appeals to youth. The familiar facts in their strange dress fascinate him and their very familiarity removes some of the difficulties of the vocabulary.

The use to which I have already put such stories and bits of history both of ancient and contemporary authorship makes me wish that we had them in greater number and variety. It is to be hoped that some enterprising publisher will see his chance for profit in putting them forth in leaflet form. But in the meantime we are by no means helpless. A mimeographic outfit will provide new sheets with little labor—I have long used familiar transcripts to illustrate graduate lecture courses—and so in a few years a department can be adequately equipped for the purposes of the daily lesson and of sight tests, to which, of course, they would be admirably adapted. An exchange of such material would be possible for neighboring institutions.

WALTON BROOKS MCDANIEL.

SOME PROOFS OF THE VALUE OF LATIN FOR MASTERING A PRACTICAL ENGLISH VOCABULARY¹

To-day with ever increasing volume comes the cry for the practical in education. War, with its attendant hardships and demands upon the people, has had a tendency to eliminate the non-essential in all walks of life and to foster the essential or the practical. Consequently we have seen recently certain industrial plants closed because their output was not essential to the prosecution of the War. Similarly in many of our Schools we have seen pupils flocking into the French classes in preference to the Latin because they considered the former more practical than the latter. While this may have been true in the case of those who had prospects of going to France and whose formal education would have been curtailed under such circumstances, we are not willing to admit that it was or is true for the mass of students. We are convinced that Latin is a practical subject in time of war or of peace. With this conviction, then, as the foundation, the aim of this paper is to show that Latin is an essential part of a practical English vocabulary and that the study of Latin aids pupils to secure such a vocabulary. In addition to some personal observations, several experiments with High School pupils have been tried and the results have been recorded. These will be explained in detail in connection with the tests.

Let us first get before us the meaning of our proposition. By a practical vocabulary we mean one composed of words in common use. As the number of such words in the English language has been estimated to be about 18,000, any one who wishes to experiment

moderately is immediately confronted by the problem of selecting representative lists of words. In securing the material for my tests, different devices for selecting words were used. These will be explained later.

In addition to containing words in common use, a vocabulary, to be most practical, must be economical and forceful. It must express ideas exactly and in as few words as possible. In this busy world it is quite essential to be able to express one's thoughts clearly and in concise form. We shall aim to show that no other element in our language is so well adapted to fulfil these requirements as the Latin.

Accepting as axioms, then, the above statements, that a practical vocabulary must be composed of words in common use and that it must be economical and forceful, we must next show that Latin is indispensable to and inseparable from a practical vocabulary. It is a well-established fact that at least 65 per cent. of the words in the English language are of Latin derivation. Investigation shows that in a passage of ordinary English 69 to 70 per cent. of the words are of Latin derivation. It is quite probable that this number has been increased recently as a result of the War and our need for new words. Almost all new scientific and war terms are of Latin derivation, while many other such words have sprung into common use as a result of the War. A few examples of these two classes are *trajectory*, *superlachrymator*, *submarine*, *maritime*, *aggression*, *armistice*, *percussion*, and *transport*. Some of those who object to the study of Latin even go so far as to express regret that it was ever introduced into the English language, and profess to believe that our language would be as good as it is if it had remained pure Anglo-Saxon. A representative of this class is Dr. Charles Zueblin, of Boston. After stating in emphatic terms, before a Teachers' Institute, his entire disdain for his "antiquated classical training", Dr. Zueblin apologized profusely for his use of words of Latin derivation by saying that he had been unable to outgrow the above mentioned antiquated training in the Classics. It was interesting for me to observe his flow of language and free use of Latin derivative words. Subsequently I collected some statistics from his address, and noted that in the space of ten minutes he used at least 125 words of Latin derivation. I also wondered just how his address would have sounded had it contained only Anglo-Saxon words. Thereupon the idea came to me to make some comparisons by rewriting some dignified article, eliminating all Latin roots. In working out this translation, as it were, I was confronted by the difficulties that beset the Chinese minister, who, in coping with the English language, tried to gain simplicity by expressing himself in monosyllables. Intent upon the task of revising the Benediction he looked in his small dictionary for synonyms of the word 'preserve' with the result that he found 'can'. As a careful student, he then looked up 'can' to find that its sole synonym was 'preserve'. Consequently he pronounced the Benediction as

¹This paper was read at the Thirteenth Annual Meeting of The Classical Association of the Atlantic States, at Haverford College, April 5, 1919.